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ABSTRACT

Described is a Utah State University project that developed materials to help college faculty teaching introductory courses in psychology, sociology, and microeconomics to incorporate knowledge concerning both the biological and social aspects of sex into their courses. For the purposes of this paper, discussion is limited to the field of psychology. One of the primary goals of the project was to develop a set of content guidelines for each of the target disciplines. For psychology these guidelines took the form of a handbook for instructors containing summaries of current knowledge about sex and gender and key references. A second project goal was to address student-faculty communication patterns, and provide suggestions for eliminating sex bias in actual classroom behavior. A student-faculty interaction handbook discussing potential forms that sex bias in the classroom might take and suggesting tactics for change was developed. The methodology used to develop the content guidelines and the student-faculty interaction handbook included literature reviews, scholarly feedback, classroom observation, and product testing and revision. (RM)

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Curriculum Analysis Project for the Social Sciences:

Integrating Scholarship About Sex and Gender Into College Coursework

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The development of new information by and about women has been an event of major importance during the last decade. Despite this new knowledge base, however, research and theory pertaining to women's issues have not become an integral part of the general curriculum in higher education. In fact, significant research exists to suggest that sex inequities occur in curriculum content at all educational levels (Grambs, 1976; Sadker & Sadker, 1979; U.S. DHEW, 1978). It appears that knowledge generated from research and scholarship about sex and gender is primarily disseminated through women's studies courses taught in colleges and universities. When such material is included in general course content, it is typically packaged and inserted in small, self-contained segments into the traditional curriculum -- an approach which has been described as "add women and stir". This approach to learning perpetrates the myth that women are special interest group or a minority despite the fact that they comprise over half the population. Appropriate recognition of women as a vital and integral part of society necessitates integration of the new scholarship about sex and gender throughout the general curriculum in higher education.

The Curriculum Analysis Project for the Social Sciences -- developed at Utah State University during 1979-81 -- was based on this premise. Its purpose was to develop materials designed to help faculty teaching introductory courses to incorporate new and existing knowledge about women into their course content and teaching practices. The disciplines selected as the focus of this endeavor were psychology, sociology, and microeconomics. For the purpose of this paper, discussion will be limited to the field of psychology. Funding was obtained through the

Women's Educational Equity Act Program, Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

A study conducted at Princeton University (Banner, 1977) offered preliminary insight about the process of incorporating material on women into core curriculum. This research attempted to make an initial determination of the extent to which such incorporation is taking place, and to determine whether a larger effort to assist faculty with course revision would be helpful. The Princeton researchers reached several conclusions relevant to the design of the Curriculum Analysis Project discussed here. First, the decision to incorporate scholarship about sex and gender is dependent upon the individual instructors interest and motivation to do so. Second, revision of curriculum typically takes place in a haphazard manner because such revision is done on an individual basis and without the assistance of systematic strategies and methodologies. Third, widespread curriculum reform is a difficult process. The revision of a course outline and incorporation of new material takes time and energy which a busy academician may not be willing or able to find. Finally, the Princeton group recommended the development of guidelines to aid the hesitant or overburdened faculty member with the incorporation of new material about sex and gender, and provide a listing of resources for becoming familiar with such scholarship. These recommendations were used to guide the development of materials in the Curriculum Analysis Project for the Social Sciences.

Description of the Curriculum Analysis Project should be prefaced by a brief consideration of terminology. Although the premises discussed above refer only to women, they contain many implications for gender

related issues relevant to men. The project began using the term "women and women's issues". However, it soon became evident that this terminology was limited and excluded important findings about men. It was felt that a broader term was required to more accurately encompass the orientation of the Curriculum Analysis Project. The term "sex and gender" was ultimately used to provide greater accuracy and flexibility. Thus, the guidelines which were developed reflect a concern for both men and women.

The term "sex and gender" was chosen not only because of its applicability to both sexes, but because it more accurately reflects the range of topics relevant to sex-related issues. Currently, there is general agreement among sociologists and psychologists that the term "sex" refers to biological components (hormones and chromosomes) while "gender" is used for the learned and cultural behaviors loosely associated with biological sex. In the sex-gender system, the scholar seeks to understand how the biological nature of humankind (procreation, reproduction, secondary sex characteristics, and visible biological differences between the sexes) is transformed culturally and socially. The Curriculum Analysis Project addressed both the biological and social aspects of sex as topics warranting attention when revising course content.

Objectives

One of the primary goals of the Curriculum Analysis Project for the Social Sciences was to develop a set of content guidelines for each of the target disciplines -- psychology, sociology, and microeconomics. For psychology these guidelines took the form of a handbook for instructors, "Assessing the Introductory Psychology Course" (Russo & Malovich, 1982).

The content guidelines were developed to provide easy access for faculty to summaries of current knowledge about sex and gender and key references. In developing these guidelines a number of target areas relating to sex and gender were first identified in order to provide a conceptual framework. These were as follows:

1. The critique of existing knowledge and theories, and the subsequent integration of new knowledge in the field (e.g. family theory which fails to take into account female employment and the increase in single parenting).

2. Controversial areas with implications for women (e.g. sociobiology, fear of success).

3. The diversity among women (e.g. gender, race, and class, and the intersections between these.

4. Contributions of women to the field.

5. Existing media resources addressing sex and gender and the identification of key references which the instructor could use to increase his/her own knowledge.

The materials ultimately developed are clearly by no means exhaustive, but rather are intended to suggest the amount and variety of available information.

A second goal of the Curriculum Analysis Project was to address student-faculty communication patterns, and provide suggestions for eliminating sex bias in actual classroom behavior. Target areas related to this more general goal were identified as follows:

1. Stereotyping of personal, social, or occupational characteristics and how to eliminate or counteract it.

2. Sex bias in language and tactics for change.

3. Classroom interaction patterns which may contribute to sex bias (e.g. verbal interaction, nonverbal communication, and use of humor).

A student-faculty interaction handbook -- "Removing Bias: Guidelines for Student-Faculty Communication" (Jenkins, 1983) -- was ultimately developed as a tool for instructors wishing to evaluate and improve their own teaching in this regard. This guideline includes discussion of potential forms that sex bias in the classroom might take, and suggests tactics for change which an instructor might adopt. Additionally, it includes a student-faculty communication checklist and a student perception questionnaire which an instructor can use to evaluate his/her class using student feedback as well as his/her own impressions.

Methodology

Having identified the eventual goals of the Curriculum Analysis Project, a comprehensive methodology was developed to address the topics described above. This included literature review, scholarly feedback, and classroom observation, as well as product testing and revision as part of the research and development phase of the project. The methodology is described briefly here, and can be found in detail in Gappa and Pearce (1982).

First a sample of textbooks used for introductory courses in each discipline was surveyed in order to generate an outline of curriculum areas commonly taught in these courses. A review of the literature on sex and gender for each discipline was then conducted in order to identify information that could be incorporated into the introductory course.

The literature relevant to sex and gender was then matched to the appropriate curriculum areas, and a set of initial content guidelines for each discipline was prepared. A group of scholars in each discipline evaluated these guidelines, which were then revised in line with their feedback. Additionally, several on-going introductory courses were observed and analyzed. These data were also used in revising and expanding the initial guidelines. Actual classroom analyses contributed substantially to the development of the classroom interaction guidelines that can be used by faculty to analyze patterns of communication in their classrooms with regard to sex and gender.

Following initial review and revision, a field review was then conducted in which the content guidelines were sent to six scholars in each discipline. These scholars were teaching introductory courses in a representative sample of higher education institutions chosen for diversity of type, geographical setting, and composition of the student body. At the conclusion of their review, a structured interview was conducted with each of the eighteen participating faculty. Also, during the field testing, the four faculty whose courses were initially observed were given a field review edition and asked for their comments and suggestions. The comments and recommendations of the faculty participating in the field review and the faculty whose classes were observed were incorporated into a final edition of the guidelines for each discipline. This final revision was conducted with assistance and advice from task force scholars.

Conclusion

The Curriculum Analysis Project thus provides the psychology

instructor with useful tools to assist him or her in eliminating sex bias in the classroom. The student-faculty communication guide provides a comprehensive overview of potential sources of sex bias in the classroom process, addressing such topics as stereotyping, language, and classroom interaction. It is hoped that an overview of this type could be used by instructors in their own efforts to become aware of the often subtle ways that sex bias can appear in the classroom setting.

The content guidelines represent a first step in the process of integrating information on sex and gender into traditional curriculum. Perhaps more importantly, they demonstrate how applicable this knowledge base is to the mainstream information presented in introductory psychology courses. Ultimately, it is hoped that appropriate knowledge about sex and gender will appear as an integral part of textbooks and teaching materials, thereby eliminating the need for special guidelines such as those discussed here.

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